

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 EB-04

COME-00 MC-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /071 W

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O 081719Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4026

SECDEF IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE

USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 26597

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, PGOV, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: STEHLIN AFFAIR: INTERNAL POLITICAL ASPECTS

REFS: (A) PARIS 26382; (B) PARIS 26504

SUMMARY. EMOTIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH OVER GENERAL STEHLIN'S LETTER IN PARIS POLITICAL CIRCLES, THUS FAR TO THE EXCLUSION OF REASON. THE LEFT, EXPECTING LITTLE GOOD FROM THE MAJORITY, HAS REACTED LESS EMOTIONALLY -- BUT NO LESS CHAUVINISTICALLY -- THAN THE UDR. THE EPISODE WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR GISCARD TO SEEK OPENLY WARMER RELATIONS WITH THE US AND NATO. WE WILL  
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HAVE TO EXERCISE EXTRA CAUTION IN THE COMING MONTHS TO

AVOID UNCOVERING ADDITIONAL ANTI-US SENTIMENT IN FRANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME FOR THE DUST TO SETTLE AND FOR EMOTIONS TO COOL, THE STEHLIN AFFAIR SEEMS CERTAIN TO HAVE APPRECIABLY MORE IMPACT ON THE MAJORITY THAN ON GISCARD'S OPPOSITION. THE REACTION OF THE SOCIALISTS (PS) AND THE COMMUNISTS (PCF) HAS BEEN GENERALLY OF THE "WHAT DID YOU EXPECT" VARIETY. THE LEFT HAS ALSO BEEN QUICK TO CITE STEHLIN'S PAST ASSOCIATION WITH HUGHES AIRCRAFT COMPANY AS PROOF OF HIS COLLUSION WITH US COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT INTERESTS.

2. WHILE THE AFFAIR MAY BE A WINDFALL FOR THE LEFT, IT IS A SETBACK TO ANY MOVES GISCARD MAY HAVE BEEN CONTEMPLATING FOR INCREASED FRENCH -- NATO DEFENSE COOPERATION, AND INDEED FOR ATLANTIC ACCOMMODATION OF ANY SORT. THE STEHLIN NOTE, AND PARTICULARLY THE FACT THAT IT WENT IN AN UNEXPLAINED MANNER TO -- AS THE GENERAL PUT IT -- "VARIOUS (FOREIGN) PERSONALITIES INTERESTED IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE", HAS BROUGHT FORTH VIRULENT KNEE-JERK REACTIONS WHICH BORDER ON HYSTERIA EVEN FROM MORE OPEN-MINDED GAULLISTS. FORMER PRIME MINISTER MESSMER WENT SO FAR AS TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE WOULD NOT SIT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHENEVER STEHLIN OCCUPIED THE PRESIDENT'S CHAIR; MESSMER'S WORRIES ARE OVER, SINCE STEHLIN RESIGNED AS ONE OF FOUR ASSEMBLY VICE PRESIDENTS LATE ON NOVEMBER 7.

3. IN THE FACE OF THE UDR'S VIOLENT NATIONALISTIC REACTION, THE CENTRIST MEMBERS OF GISCARD'S COALITION HAVE EXPRESSED RELATIVELY MUTED DISTRESS, MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER. (STEHLIN HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM THE REFORMER GROUP IN THE ASSEMBLY BUT WILL REMAIN A DEPUTY). THE CENTRISTS

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 26597

STAND TO LOSE THE MOST: AFTER PATIENTLY CHIPPING AWAY AT BOTH GAULLIST AND PS-PCF ANTI-ATLANTICISM, THEIR EFFORTS HAVE SUDDENLY BEEN DASHED BY ONE MAN'S WELL-MOTIVATED BUT ILL-CONSIDERED ACT. IN DECIDING TO PLAY SANCHEZ TO STEHLIN'S DON QUIXOTE, JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER ODDLY CAME OUT WITH A THOUGHTFUL COMMENT NOTING THAT "ANYTHING GENERAL STEHLIN CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE BEST WAY OF SPENDING FRENCH MONEY AND DEFENDING FRANCE IS PERFECTLY CORRECT AND NORMAL."

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4. THE STEHLIN AFFAIR REVEALS THAT EVEN IN THE POST-UDR-GOVERNMENT ERA, FRENCHMEN OF NEARLY ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS CONTINUE TO REACT WITH EMOTIONAL CHAUVINISM TO WHAT THEY SEE AS A LOSS OF "NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE." IT REMINDS US THAT IN THE LAND WHICH GLORIES IN CARTESIAN LOGIC, PASSIONS STILL RUN DEEP: HARDLY A REASONED WORD HAS BEEN HEARD THUS FAR ON THE MERITS OF STEHLIN'S ARGUMENTS, WHICH AN AMERICAN OBSERVER WOULD FIND TO BE SUBSTANTIAL. IT IS CLEAR THAT EXTRA CAUTION WILL BE REQUIRED IN FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE COMING MONTHS IF WE WISH TO AVOID SURFACING ADDITIONAL

ANTI-US SENTIMENT IN FRANCE AND SIMULTANEOUSLY EXPOSING  
GISCARD'S UNRULY MAJORITY TO FURTHER SHOCKS. INDEED, IF  
THE FRENCH DO NOT WIN ANY PART OF THE CONSORTIUM MARKET,  
WE CAN READILY EXPECT "AMERICAN ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM"  
RATHER THAN FRANCE'S TECHNICAL INFERIORITY TO BE THE  
MAIN SCAPEGOAT.  
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